



News from Oman

(Dhofar Letter)

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THE CRISIS OF THE NIXON-DOCTRINE

1978 became a year in which the global strategy of the USA, characterized by the so-called Nixon-doctrine, ran into a serious crisis in the Gulf area: The violent development in Iran and Yemen threatens to escape the control of imperialism, and is thereby a serious menace to the power of the Western World in the area.

The Crisis in Iran

For the USA, the real builder of the Shah's Iran, it must be the deadly irony of history manifesting itself, when this enormous military state, built up to secure an entire region against social revolutions, now is threatened by Iran's own people in revolt. During the large anti-Shah demonstrations the Shah has felt so threatened, that he has found it necessary to conduct bloody massacres on the people. But thereby the Shah has isolated himself and perhaps made it impossible to arrange a compromise with the opposition. The whole Iranian people is against the Shah and demands his resignation.

In this situation the USA has for a very long time given the Shah its complete support. The support does not only include a flow of official statements, backing up the Shah completely in his killings of demonstrators, or consignments of material to defeat riots, but includes first of all, that the USA uses its big influence in the Iranian army to support the Shah. It is only because of the army that the Shah has

been able to stay in power so long. You may wonder why the imperialists not long ago have found a less sanguinary candidate from the opposition to take care of their interests. According to the western propaganda the opposition is made up of a gang of religious fanatics opposing development and progress, and this kind of people the USA usually comes to an agreement with as for example in Saudi Arabia.

But the Shah is of especial importance to the USA. The Shah is the US instrument of foreign affairs in the area, and therefore the oppositions struggle against the Shah may very easily clash with the dominance and influence of imperialism in Iran. If the Shah falls, the USA may risk a total collapse of its strategy in the area. (For a closer analysis of the development in Iran see: Merip Reports No. 69, 70, 71)

The Gulf Security Pact

The crisis in Iran, which is a crisis in the strategy of imperialism in the Gulf, therefore also affects the Gulf Security Pact, the means of realizing this strategy. The initiatives concerning the Gulf Security Pact have been suspended as long as the crisis in Iran remains violent, but the crisis has affected certain viewpoints of the parties which have been invariable until then. Before the crisis in Iran became serious, Iran pressed to establish a formal military pact, in accordance with its role in the strategy of imperialism, while Saudi Arabia was rather contented with the official and non-official security cooperation including exchanging of information and coordination, established between the reactionary Arab states and Iran. (See News from Oman No. 30, 1978).

Saudi Arabia was afraid of Iran's direct presence on Arabian territory with military and intelligence service. An example of Saudi Arabia's unsympathetic attitude is a statement of the Saudi Arabian Minister of the Interior saying that "fraternal and historical relations based on Islam are much more significant than security agreements" (Arabia and the Gulf 24.7.78). Already in August however Saudi Arabia shows that they are very anxious about the present development in Iran, and this proves how relative the antagonism between Saudi Arabia and Iran is. The Saudi Minister of Defence, Prince Sultan, stresses in an interview with the Kuwait newspaper "al-Siyassah" the importance of stability in Iran and call on all Arab states to support the Shah against the present wave

of violence. Because, as he says, any disruption of the stability of Iran is bound to affect the security situation in the entire area. (A&G 11.9.78/Summary of World Broadcasts 26.8.78). The development has brought Saudi Arabia and Iran closer together which probably will make the negotiations on the Security Pact easier, if the Shah survives.

The Cooperation Between Iran and Oman

The crisis of the Shah may become serious for Sultan Qaboos in Oman. The Shah's support with military and intelligence services is of decisive importance to Qaboos in order to suppress the opposition of the people. If this support ceases and if Qaboos cannot get support in another way from abroad, the conditions will be in favour of the PFLO, who is strengthened on all levels today, compared with the situation immediately after the military setback at the end of 1975. An example of the renewed strenght of the PFLO is the increased military activity in Dhofar (see NFO No. 30 and 31, 1978). Add to this the tensions resulting from Qaboos' attempts to establish tribal councils in the country (see NFO No. 30, 1978). A representative of the PFLO has informed KROAG that the tribal councils have met opposition in Dhofar in the form of demonstrations, and in the town Sohar in the northern part of Oman, 30 people have been killed during similar demonstrations.

On the external level, the situation may become problematic for Qaboos too. It is a well-known fact that Oman is Iran's main-ally and instrument in the area. With the support of Iran, Qaboos has gone rather far, and in some cases he has not refrained from provoking his large neighbour Saudi Arabia, as for example when Oman laid claim to parts of the territory of Ras al-Khaima (see NFO No. 30, 1978). There have been a number of negotiations about the disputed area between Oman and The United Arab Emirates, but they have made slow progress, especially because of opposition from Sheik Saqr of Ras al-Khaima. For example he stated in an interview that "there was a conspiracy to impase Iranian supervision over the entrance to the Gulf in cooperation with the Sultanate" (A&G 17.4.78). According to "Al Mustaqbel" 8.7.78, Ras al-Khaima nevertheless is said to have given Oman the right of supervising ten miles of the disputed coast. Oman is said to have established control-posts and having prepared the establishment of artillery posts in some parts of the coast.

(Saut al-Thawra No. 20, August 78). According to the Libyan News bureau the situation is further complicated because Qaboos has provoked Ras al-Khaima by concentrating military forces near the border as a menace to occupy the area. (quoted in SWB, 13.11.78).

Without the backing of the Shah, Qaboos will get serious problems.

Imperialist Conspiracies

The world press has totally agreed who to hold responsible for the violent events in South- and North Yemen at the end of June 1978. When President al-Ghasmi of North Yemen was murdered on the 24'th June, it was reported that he got killed, when a map, containing explosives, brought by an envoy from President Salem Rubai Ali of South Yemen, exploded. Two days later Rubai Ali was executed, and it was then a widespread opinion that in fact it was the General Secretary of the Unified Political Organization the National Front (now one party: The Socialist Party of Yemen, formed on the 11'th October 1978) Abdul Fattah Ismail, who had been behind the murder of al-Ghasmi in order to get an opportunity to get rid of his rival Rubai Ali.

You may wonder why a small socialist country, surrounded by powerful hostile neighbours, should cause such serious problems for itself. You come to a more likely explanation by making a general and historical analysis of the significance of the two Yemens on the Peninsula and for imperialism. It is important to recognize that North Yemen, with 6.5 million inhabitants, makes out the largest population on the Peninsula. (In comparison Saudi Arabia's population is estimated at 4.5 million of whom about 1.5 million are emigrant workers. More than 1 million of the emigrant workers come from Yemen, especially North Yemen. They are working as unskilled workers and make up the manual labour force of Saudi Arabia (Merip Report No. 59, August 77)). Therefore it is easy to understand that the idea of unity between the masses of North Yemen and the progressive South Yemen (1.7 million inhabitants) is something, imperialism is really afraid of. In such a united Yemeni state there would no doubt arise powerful anti-feudal, anti-Saudi and anti-imperialist fronts which might develop into a real menace to imperialism. The imperialists had a fright in 1972: Saudi Arabia had just organized reactionaries in exile in North Yemen to attack

South Yemen. After two weeks of warfare the fights stopped, and the two Yemeni governments agreed surprisingly in forming one Yemeni state. However Saudi Arabia in cooperation with reactionary Sheiks in the North succeeded in desposing the president and thereby frustrating the plan. The efforts to unite were taken up once again under al-Ghasmi's predecessor Ibrahim al-Hamdi (July 1974 - October 77), regarded by many Yemenis as "the best president North Yemen ever had" (The Middle East August 78). But this time Saudi Arabia acted quickly. On the evening before a planned departure for Aden he was murdered. At a press conference in Beirut there was thrown light on the murder of al-Hamdi. Major Maj Abdul Alem, a former member of the governing Command Council of North Yemen, expelled by al-Ghasmi in April 78 (A & G 24.7.78) told, that the president was liquidated because he was in disagreement with Saudi Arabia, among other things on the planned visit to Aden and because he had rejected a Saudi demand to set up a base at the Bab al-Mandeb strait. The president had been killed at the house of al-Ghasmi, after which charges were fabricated that he had been killed together with two French girls, but the girls had been killed elsewhere and brought to the scene of the crime (A & G 24.7.78). After his expulsion, Major Maj Abdul Alem conducted a revolt in the southern part of North Yemen against al-Ghasmi in May, but the revolt was defeated (A & G 5.6.78).

A progressive development in Yemen is then prevented, because Saudi Arabia - usually using the worst gangster methods - secures the control of the political conditions in North Yemen. The basis of Saudi Arabia's control is its great influence in the army, its financing of about one third of the country's budget and the alliance with reactionary tribal Sheiks in the northern part of the country (A & G 20.3 and 10.7.78). In addition Saudi Arabia is of course interested in doing anything to weaken and isolate South Yemen.

After the murder on the popular al-Hamdi, who had pursued an independent policy, Saudi Arabia was facing the problem of getting North Yemen back under its complete control. In order to do so they used Commander in the Army, al-Ghasmi. According to "The Middle East", August 78, al-Ghasmi was only the nominal leader and an "interim measure" to take the responsibility for the unpopular measures it was necessary to resort to, in order to get North Yemen under the dominance of Saudi Arabia again. He had evident weak points as a

permanent leader and according to the magazine, al-Ghasmi knew very well that his position and life were threatened seriously.

Of course Saudi Arabia and its agents will try to turn the solution of the problem to their best advantage. The Egyptian weekly "al-Ahali" is of the opinion that the story about the bomb in the South Yemenits map is improbable, and it mentions as an alternative explanation that a bomb had already been planted in the presidents office, timed to explode simultaneously with the arrival of the South Yemeni envoy(A & G 24.7.78). In this way Saudi Arabia gets rid of a worn-out servant, and brings South Yemen into discredit. At an emergency meeting in the Arab League Council it was decided to freeze the political and diplomatic relations with South Yemen, stop all technical aid and break off the economic and culturel relations(SWB 4.7.78). However Syria, Iraq, Libya, Algeria, Djibouti and the PLO were not present at the meeting. At the Arab summit conference in Baghdad it was decided to cancel all boycott decisions made against South Yemen by the Arab League Council(Aden home service/SWB 7.11.78 and The Middle East, December 78).

The events in North Yemen were the spark, which provoked internal disagreements within the government of South Yemen to flare up. It is difficult to find out precisely what the disagreements were all about. South Yemen has always given very few informations concerning internal affairs as measure against imperialist attempts of infiltration. According to "The Middle East", August 78, the disagreements were on how to build socialism in South Yemen, for example as regards the formation of an avant-garde Party and its authorities, and South Yemen's relations with the socialist countries and the Arab world.

The Crisis of the Nixon-Doctrine

The political strategy of the US imperialism in the Gulf and on the Arab Peninsula has not only been affected by the crises in Iran, but also by crisis in the smaller satellites of imperialism. The imperialist attempts to create powerful reactionary military regimes to serve its interests were accomplished concerning North Yemen when Commander in the Army Ali Abdullah Saleh became president in July 78 following al-Ghasmi. Ali Abdullah is said to have been closely involved

in the murder of both al-Hamdi and al-Ghasmi (A & G 5.6.78 and The Middle East, August 78). With such a puppet, the control of imperialism must be accomplished in North Yemen, you would believe, but the internal unrest in the country is growing. On the 15'th October a military coup was carried out, lasting for more than a week (The Middle East, December 1978). The opposition of the people is organized under the leadership of the Democratic National Front (formed in 76). Over radio Aden the Front has reported about successful fights between the armed revolutionary forces of the people and the mercenaries of the Sana regime. During an action a lot of weapons have been conquered. The Front tells about growing support for the struggle against the reactionary regime and about the regime's mad terror towards the people in the area. It is reported that more than 5000 people have been imprisoned and are subjected to the worst forms of torture (quoted in SWB 13,14,23 and 30 November 78).

Also the efforts to unite have been taken up again: More than 2000 tribesmen, representing various nationalist tribes in North Yemen, crossed the border and arrived in Aden on the 23'rd October to celebrate the 15'th anniversary of the joint Yemeni 14'th October Revolution. Congratulations on the establishment of the Yemeni Socialist Party were offered and will to struggle under the leadership of the Democratic National Front for an united democratic Yemen was expressed (Aden home service in SWB 25.10.78 and The Middle East, December 78).

PFLQ has transmitted the following statement over radio Aden about the situation in North Yemen and the crisis of imperialism in the area:

" Brothers: Several weeks ago the San'a regime signed an agreement with US imperialism under which it granted the USA the right to use Kathib harbour, near the port of Hudaydah, for the stationing of US warships. The agreement also provided for the construction of an air base at (?Matrah), between the towns of Hudaydah and Ta'izz. The agreement followed a visit made recently by a US military mission to study the military requirements of the San'a regime.

This sinister agreement comes at a time when there has been an increase in acts of popular resistance, led by the Democratic National Front, against the regime in San'a. The agreement was not conceived on the spur of the moment, but was cooked-up long ago. Many parties - all of them hostile

to the aspirations of the Yemeni people - took part in hatching this conspiracy.

The signing of this agreement by the San'a regime is a living embodiment of the close link binding the regime in San'a to the US imperialist circles which are striving to create props for themselves in various parts of the peninsular and the Arabian Gulf so as to be able to keep control over this important region, which is rich in vast oil resources.

US imperialism, the leader of world imperialism, sees that the reins of power are almost slipping away from its grasp in this region. It is, therefore trying quickly to adjust conditions in the region by shoring-up its satellite reactionary regimes.

Developments in Iran highlighted several facts - and chiefly this, that these regimes are incapable of showing self-reliance when it comes to protecting the systems in their countries, regardless of how much war material they might have. The USA thus found that it must not only supply these regimes with modern weapons but also have military bases nearby so that it can prop up its stooges in this or that country.

The military agreement between San'a and Washington is clear evidence of the new imperialist strategy in the Arabian Gulf and Arabian peninsular region.

The US military presence in the region is not the first of its kind. Since 1968, when Britain issued a white paper setting out its military policy east of Suez, namely the plan to withdraw militarily from East Asia and the Arabian Gulf, the USA began to replace it in these areas. It adjusted conditions in them in keeping with its world strategy, which is geared to the preservation of colonialist remnants. As regards the Arabian Gulf area, this policy was manifested in the acquisition by the USA of two naval bases in (?Bikhayr) and Masirah; and now, as regards the Arabian peninsula and the Red Sea area, in its acquisition of a naval base in Kathib in the northern part of Yemen (Aden Voice of Oman Revolution in SWB 25.11.78)

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